

## Stormwater – It's not just about flooding any more.

### Clean rainfall can be a major source of pollution.

The best way to reduce pollution from runoff is at the source and for this we need your help. Please help us.

#### You can help keep the stormwater clean by:

- Never pour household products that contain chemicals, such as insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, and used motor oil and other auto fluids onto the ground or into storm drains.
- Recycle or properly dispose of household products that contain chemicals at our annual Household Hazardous Waste Day. *(Look on the Bellingham homepage, cable scroll, and sign boards for posting of our annual Household Hazardous Waste Day. It is typically held in June.)*
- Use organic mulch or safer pest control methods whenever possible. If using pesticides, fertilizers and any lawn chemicals, do so sparingly, following the recommended amounts and application instructions.
- Never apply lawn chemicals if the forecast calls for heavy rain. This will wash the chemicals away, diminishing their effectiveness and sending most of these expensive products into our waters.
- Clean paint brushes in a sink, not outdoors. Filter and reuse paint thinner when using oil-based paints.
- When walking your pet, remember to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method.
- Do not dispose of yard waste in detention basins, ponds, streams, or drainage ditches.
- Do not litter.

You can also help us address problems by being our watch dogs. **We have over 270 storm drain outfalls and will never have the staff to inspect all of these as often as we would like. We need your eyes. If you notice a pipe near a stream, pond, or drainage ditch that is: blocked, discharging water that looks like it is polluted, or is running at times when there has not been any recent rain or snow melt, please call us at 508-966-5813. We will investigate.**

#### **Stormwater – What it is and why it is a source of pollution.**

Stormwater runoff is created when rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. As this water flows over driveways, lawns, sidewalks and streets, it picks up litter, trash, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants. Stormwater can flow directly into the nearest body of water or into catch basins located in the street. These catch basins are connected to the storm drain system.

Most storm drain systems were just a transportation system until 1996, when new State standards were published. There was no sophisticated form of treatment. Catch basins provide minimal treatment by allowing some of the sediment to settle out before entering the drain system, but the drain system just transports the runoff to a discharge point at a stream, river, or pond.

Our understanding of stormwater is improving. We now know that the sediment in the runoff is laden with pollutants. Any storm drain system constructed in the last ten years has included additional new treatment measures. Stormwater quality measures such as improved catch basins, sedimentation basins, plunge pools, vegetative swales, and others are now part of every new storm drain system that is constructed. These relatively new ideas help, but still do not provide any sophisticated treatment. They remove sediment, but many pollutants dissolve and therefore will not settle out.